“It’s Not About Us”

red. media is facing criminal charges but wants you to see the bigger picture. Interview with Hüseyin Dogru, founder of red. media

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photo: red. media

Hello Hüseyin. Thanks for speaking to us. Could you start by introducing yourself

My name is Hüseyin Dogru. I’ve been a journalist for 15-16 years and am the founder of “red. media”, a socialist, anti-fascist news outlet. Initially I focused on social-political issues in Germany, Turkey, and Kurdish topics. Since 7 or 8 years I’ve been concentrating on international politics; documentaries or articles about people’s struggle around the world.

If you google “red. media” one of the first things that comes up is “arm of the Kremlin” or “Putin apologist”. Is that a fair description?

Sometimes we were also accused of being a Chinese or Hamas media outlet. These accusations are completely untrue. German media reporting always refers to articles written by Tagesspiegel, who did a so-called investigation on us, using the logic: “Hüseyin Dogru worked at Redfish. Now, he’s running red. media.” and “red. media took over

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The Telegram channel part is true. red. media took Redfish's Telegram channel because it was something that I had built, and I was free to take it with me when we left Redfish. But to me, the first claim is similar to claiming that many Germans must be Nazis since they have a Nazi family member in their past! No, we are not Russian. We are not Kremlin. red. media is not funded by Russia or any other state.

Let's set the record straight: what is your opinion on the war in Ukraine?

The war in Ukraine is the product of a conflict between two rival imperialist blocs. On one side, NATO, the United States, and the EU have expanded eastward, violating historical agreements meant to limit NATO's growth. On the other side, Russia, itself a capitalist power, pursues its own economic and political ambitions through military force. Neither bloc represents the interests of ordinary people. Their power struggles have turned Ukraine into a battleground, with the real cost borne by the working class and civilian population. Genuine solidarity demands rejecting both imperialist camps and focusing instead on those who are paying for this war with their lives.

Where do you receive your funding from?

As stated on our website, donations from individuals and organizations around the world make our work possible. We don't openly share our donors because those individuals don't wish to have their names public, due to us being targeted, criminalized, and associated with Russia and other states.

What has caused the German media to call you out like this?

When we started red. media, we gained a small following of mainly anti-imperialists and leftists. But after October 7th, everything changed for us. Due to our underground and intensive reporting on the genocide in Palestine, our reach exploded. When our Instagram and Youtube accounts were shut down 9 months later, we had almost half a billion views across the world. We were bigger than all the other social media accounts who are covering that topic.

I think that was one of the reasons why we got attacked. First, the Berlin-based Tagesspiegel wrote a very politically-aimed investigation about us. They attacked our pro-Palestinian coverage by framing us as Russians.

I think it's political because they also accused us of organizing Palestinian protests in Berlin. By criminalizing us, they try to criminalize that movement. Similarly, people like Nicholas Potter describe us as a "Kremlin-controlled, radical-left, pro-Palestinian".

Now there are criminal charges against you. Can you explain what's happening?

Last year Nicholas Potter wrote an article in Taz about us, claiming that we are Russian and picking up on the Tagesspiegel article which claimed we were behind the university protests and occupation. We did

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political agenda? If you look at his journalism, it is very one-sided and uncritically pro-Israel.

We then made a post which was just a list of places where he worked and contributed. That post went viral on X because a lot of people could see what we were trying to highlight: that this supposedly anti-extremist, anti-racist, so-called leftist journalist was doing a fellowship at The Jerusalem Post. You need to have a specific character to go into a country where a genocide is happening and work at the news outlet parroting the narrative of those committing war crimes.

Within 21 hours, Jörg Reichel from Ver.di (dju), the German journalist trade union, posted a tweet saying, "this is a campaign against Potter and journalism."

Then—I think January or February according to Potter—some people supposedly created a poster combining our post with a photo of Potter and the word *Hurensohn* ["son of a bitch"]. In response, Tagesspiel wrote an article which linked red. media's initial post with the flyers and suggested an aggressive, silencing campaign.

This got picked up by every single media outlet that you can imagine in Germany: die Welt, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Taz, as well as politicians, individual journalists, and more. As time went on, Potter's claim turned from "red. media is maybe leading a campaign" to "this *is* a campaign by red. media." He provided no proof for this.

Now, 2-3 weeks ago, I got a letter from the German police asking me to comment on a case which was filed against me as part of a campaign based on defamation and lies. There is no information in the letter about who has filed this case. And now we're waiting to see what is going to happen.

Did any of these news media companies try to interview you about this?

No-one interviewed us about this case. When German news outlets approached us in the past, they sent us very pointed questions. The highlight was Deutschlandfunk. When they wrote to us, one of the "questions" was: "You're obviously funded by Russia..." Based on what? None of the interview requests that we got asked us what we think about Russia, or about Putin, or Ukraine. No one ever asked us these questions. Everyone accused us of being a misinformation media outlet. But they never showed research or evidence that we had put out the wrong facts.

Do you expect this to go to court?

Yes, I think this will go to court, but their suit would not survive as a defamation campaign in front of a normal, non-biased court because our post is just a list of public information that is available on Potter's website.

I think the main strategy behind the charge is to have a headline: "Kremlin-controlled red. media founder Hüseyin Doğru charged." After

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Germany, not only in this case, but also against activists, academics, and even UN special reporteur Francesca Albanese. I think it is important, even if we don't win, to go to court and leave a message for history.

What happens now?

We will take every legal step necessary to defend ourselves against these and future baseless attacks. We will hold them legally accountable for their unethical reporting and defamation campaign against us.

Why? Because they wrote articles where they claim things as a fact for which they can't show any proof. Instead they all cite each other. For example: "based on an article by the Taz edit-in-chief, red. media is behind this campaign," without any further fact-checking. Der Freitag even wrote "red. media, which is banned in Germany..." This is the real disinformation campaign.

People will easily accept that the Tagesspiegel, a pretty right-wing newspaper, will campaign against you. They'll be a bit more confused about Taz and der Freitag, which are both supposed to be liberal papers, and Ver.di which is a Trade union. Unions are supposed to defend their members. Similarly, Reporter Ohne Grenzen (ROG, Reporters Without Borders) is not a right-wing organisation. How is the opposition to what you're doing so broad? What's in it for them in attacking you?

Taz is not a liberal or leftist newspaper. First of all, one of the editors-in-chief of Taz is a former Tagesspiegel employee and Washington correspondent. If you look at who's working at Taz or who worked there, it's mainly people at the Springer-Verlag, the most Islamophobic and racist newspaper in Germany and in Europe.

Der Freitag and other news outlets in that category appear very liberal and unbiased until it comes to one thing: German foreign policy. In the fundamental reporting and editorial line, I would say that they ultimately side with Israel. Not with the Palestinian people. They're on the side of those who are committing the genocide there.

In support of ROG, in their 2024 report, they are trying to be more neutral. They wrote: there is a pressure against journalists in German newspapers not to write critically about Israel. They also wrote how German journalists are unfairly targeting activists. But when it comes to the story of us being backed by Russia, they didn't even check their facts or the sources and have not responded to us about how they verified this claim. If you look at who is at ROG in Germany, the people are former Taz and one is still at Tagesspiegel. So, can they be politically unbiased?

People can read all this and see, oh, this is terrible, then walk on. What can they concretely do to support you?

We are not important. It is more important that journalists like you,

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the basic journalistic standards of checking the facts.

We have the German police battering pro-Palestinian people, and the German judicial system wanting to deport 4 non-criminal, pro-Palestinian activists, which is against EU law. Meanwhile, the German journalistic monopoly is enacting the most dangerous violence: discrediting activists and journalists, creating a political atmosphere which leads to the arrests, demonstration bans, deportations, and possibly more.

So people should scandalize the fact that German journalists are supporting or legitimizing a genocide and crimes against humanity in Palestine. It's not about red. media, and we don't want people to make it about us.

But if you do get taken to court, you'd invite people to come and join you?

Of course. I think that it is very important that people see what is happening publicly. There might be a danger that I get arrested or that my house gets raided. In a normal world maybe not, but in this world today, everything is possible, especially in Germany. That is why it will be important that people come and call out the German media outlets who are responsible for these things. It's not about us.

I feel like Germany is not shy about the fact that they were repressing protests, free speech, and now deporting these activists. And the world already knows. So, who would Germany answer to?

I don't think the world knows. Even we forgot what happened one and a half years ago in the streets of Germany. We forgot that in one day Israel bombed the first hospital and more than 300 people died in one night. We forgot all of that because social media is flooded with information right now, which we can't select.

We are exposed to so much information, which is also a strategy by Tagesspiegel and co., flooding everything. They have a monopoly here in Germany. Pro-Palestinian things are deleted, everything else is pushed. The whole system needs to be exposed.

The most important thing that people can do is read, investigate, and be critical with all media sources—including us! Don't believe what we're saying. Imagine that Taz writes an article saying: "According to Tagesspiegel, red. media is Russian." And then another one writes "red. media *is* Russian." Maybe you read only the last article, but follow the line back to where that information originally came from.

People are saying that German Society is shifting to the right. No, the shifting finished when the AfD went into the parliament. The shift is over when journalists already support censorship and repetition of lies. That's dangerous. All those campaigns and attacks and scandalizing of protests as "pro-Hamas activity" is meant to completely make sure you don't see the Fascist, authoritarian laws being implemented. Maybe, I hope not. That's why they are trying to silence us.

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See their press release for more details.

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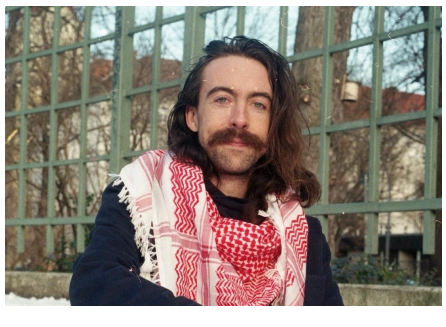

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